

Let's Be Honest About Cigaretts

The medical researchers are not being fair to the American people in their pronouncements about cigaret smoking.

Two weeks ago, Dr. Leroy E. Burney, surgeon general of the U. S. Public Health Service, came out with another one of those horrendous statements linking cigarettes with lung cancer.

Now comes the American Medical Association Journal with an editorial stating that there is insufficient evidence "to warrant the assumption" that cigarettes are a major factor in the increase.

Certainly the AMA Journal is as authoritative as the Public Health Service. Why can't the doctors get together and decide just what they do mean?

The Journal goes on to say, "Altho the studies reveal a relationship between cigaret smoking and cancer that seems more than co-incidental, they do not explain why, even when smoking patterns are the same, the case rates are higher among men than among women and among urban than among rural populations."

In the statistical attacks on cigarets, pipes and cigars usually come out with a clean bill of health. But surely, if cigaret smoke is so harmful, the heavier types of tobacco smoke should be equally harmful.

Perhaps a statistical study should be made of the attitudes and personality patterns of the researchers. Those who work for the tobacco companies are immediately suspects; they at least hope that their investi-

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gations will not uncover something their employers would not like.

But what about the independent researchers? Are they gathering evidence to support their opinions?

The whole matter is suspect because age-old puritanical objections to smoking still influence people's thinking. From the first introduction of tobacco into Europe there were those who claimed it did all sorts of frightful things to people. And, on the other hand, there have always been those who praised smoke extravagantly.

More intellectual honesty in this matter would be appropriate.

BEE

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A Break For Tobacco

An accepted organ of the medical world has at last spoken up on the broad question of smoking and its relation to human health. The Journal of the American Medical Association has come to the rescue of a beleaguered industry fighting a number of attacks made on the custom. The recent statements of Dr. LeRoy E. Burney, surgeon general of the United States Public Health Service, are challenged by the medical journal. Many have come forward already to say that it is presumptuous to indict smoking as the principal cause of lung cancer when there is insufficient proof to support that claim.

It is by no means certain that this defense of the industry will silence those who continually are sniping at tobacco and repeating the old threadbare charges.

It is doubtful if the public is convinced that what Dr. Burney said is true, for not only is the consumption of cigarettes steadily increasing, but the country is being made conscious of other factors in the cancer situation.

Only this week the issue of dangerous additives was broached once more with the assertion that certain chemicals used to fatten hens artificially promotes the development of malignancy. In the same breath there has been a suspicion brought forward before a Senate investigating committee that some of the new medicines have elements in them which produce an adverse reaction to the patient. There is also the rising fear that the pollution of the air by monoxide fumes and other emanations from internal combustion engines, are setting up irritations in the human respiratory system which gradually develop into malignant growths.

People are even beginning to wonder if the Pure Food and Drug Act is being applied to the maximum benefit of the public since it has been said that the rate of development in additives, preservatives and colorants applied to food is faster than the staff of chemists can make their determining experiments.

So many new factors have sprung up in relation to cancer and its cause that tobacco cannot any longer be singled out for this indictment. But the psychological damage done is considerable in terms of the tobacco industry. If some medical group were to give an opinion that the colorant that is added to oranges is detrimental to health there would be a loud cry from the orange groves just as the cranberry bogs up north have been heard from over the poison scare.

NEWS & OBSERVER

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AMA Neutral On Lung Cancer

Through its publication, *The Journal*, the American Medical Association has now taken a neutral position in the controversy as to whether or not cigarette-smoking has been proven to be the main factor in the recent increase in reported cases of lung cancer.

The Journal has now properly repudiated the views of Dr. Leroy E. Burney, chief of the U. S. Public Service, which appeared in its own columns last month. Dr. Burney made the flat statement that smoking is the "main factor" in the increase although conceding that there are "unanswered questions" which he brushed aside.

These questions rise from the fact that the evidence shows that more cases have been reported among men than women where both groups had the same smoking habits; and that men smokers who live in cities have had more lung cancer than rural residents who smoke just

as many cigarettes. *The Journal* does conclude, however, that pertinent statistics "reveal a connection between cigarette-smoking and cancer that seems more than coincidental."

After considering all the evidence, *The Journal* makes this wise summary: "Neither the proponents nor the opponents of the smoking theory have sufficient evidence to warrant the assumption of an all-or-none authoritative position."

Both the U. S. Public Health Service and private physicians would do well to follow the advice of the AMA to await "definitive studies" before taking a dogmatic position for or against the smoking theory as related to cancer.

Certainly opinions on the subject should not be proclaimed as proven facts. Those who prefer facts to opinions should emulate the AMA by reserving judgment until actual proof is available.